

Book Review

Pelagic Snails. The Biology of Holoplanktonic Gastropod Mollusks by C. M. Lalli and R. W. Gilmer. 1989. Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA. 259 pages. \$49.50 US.

Holoplanktonic molluscs, those gastropods which undergo their entire life cycle in the water column, are among the least known snails. There are basically two reasons for this. Firstly the animals are usually small and have traditionally been studied using material collected in plankton nets. With few exceptions the material was bulk preserved at sea so there were no opportunities for live study of the animals. The second reason was that planktonic molluscs constitute only a small fraction of the total zooplankton, and plankton workers naturally concentrated on the more common groups.

The use of bulk preserved plankton material made the study of planktonic molluscs extremely difficult. It is a credit to the skill and patience of early workers that they were able to obtain a great deal of information from material that was often badly preserved, but inevitably there were misinterpretations based on preserved material. Our knowledge of planktonic molluscs — primarily the prosobranch heteropods and the opisthobranch thecosomatous and gymnosomatous pteropods — increased rapidly in the last 20 years as animals were observed in the field using scuba techniques and individual animals were collected and studied in the laboratory. Lalli and Gilmer were pioneers in the examination of live holoplanktonic molluscs. Through their work over the years they have been able to clear up many misconceptions which arose in the earlier studies. *Pelagic Snails* draws together their own work and that of other authors to present an up to date account of our current knowledge of heteropods, pteropods, planktonic nudibranchs, and janthinid snails.

However the book is more than just a summary of published literature. Throughout the text are numerous previously unpublished facts and interpretations of function gathered over many years. The book is very well written and readable, presenting these fascinating animals in an interesting manner. The highlight is the outstanding colour photographs of the living animals. *Pelagic Snails* will be must reading for anyone seriously interested in molluscs.

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